

### Overlap—Waiting on Jesus

Relationships don't happen on schedule. They don't follow an outline. True relationships, whether its marriage, or friends, or the people you work with are filled with twists and turns and detours.

Imagine what love and romance would be like if it was purely by appointment, and everything happened on a planned schedule. "Okay, you call me at 8:45 am. I'll text you three sentences during lunch at 12:24. You will reply at 12:28. We'll have 7 minutes of meaningful conversation during dinner. And we will kiss for 23 seconds before bed at 10:37.

Ah, true love! Wait a minute! That's not how love works. That's not how relationships work. That's not how life works.

Love can't be compartmentalized. Love can't be contained. Love can't be compartmentalized.

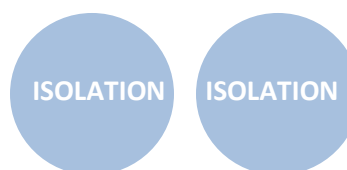
Relationships happen in the overlaps of life. I'm coming. She's going. We share a few words. I teasingly pinch her. She winks and gives me a kiss. We go about our evening, and yet something very significant has just transpired. It wasn't planned. It wasn't scheduled, and yet without it, love slowly withers.

That's how all relationships work. Okay, maybe without the pinch, wink, and kiss, but you get my meaning. Relationships happen in the overlaps and overflows of life. You stop by the grocery store on the way home from work and you talk with someone for a few minutes. You go out to get your mail and see your neighbor doing the same. A meaningful conversation begins with a simple "How are you guys doing?" And we all know sometimes the most important decisions are made in the meeting after the meeting.

These are the overlaps of life. It happens naturally. Organically. This is how it is with our relationships with others. It's also how it is in our relationship with God.

It looks like this:

Not Like This:



Instead of just letting these overlaps happen by accident, what if we could be more intentional in how we engage with God and others in the overlaps of life. Over the next few weeks we want to explore how we can better connect in these overlaps.

When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, we tend to think of the big moments where our relationship with God is all the focus—Sunday morning worship. Youth group. CIY. A retreat. Men's encounter, Women's encounter. Those sorts of things. We expect to meet Jesus and

grow with Jesus there. But what about in the margins? What about the overlaps? When Jesus isn't on the schedule. He isn't the primary focus and we're waiting on the next thing.

We spend a lot of time in life where Jesus isn't the primary focus- a lot of time when we are simply waiting for the next thing, or we're doing something else. How do you grow with Jesus on Thursday and Sunday is still three days away?

We don't usually like waiting. Waiting in line. Waiting rooms. Waiting on someone. Call waiting. Waiting for the inevitable. Accidents waiting to happen.

Does anyone else here have a hard time being patient? Tom Petty was right. Waiting is the hardest part. Janette Oke writes, "Impatience can cause wise people to do foolish things."

I like to cook. Okay. I'll be honest. I like to eat which means sometimes I have to cook the things I like to eat. The problem is that I can be very impatient in the kitchen. I stick things in the oven before it has fully preheated. I turn the heat on the smoker up and take the meat out two hours early hoping it's done. I don't give the cinnamon rolls enough time to rise. I open the oven door prematurely and watch my soufflé fall into a spongy pancake. I need to remember that if I truly love soufflé, then I need to wait on the soufflé.

**True love waits.** Do you remember that expression? The expression was to encourage sexual purity, to encourage teens that sex, like money, can be so much more when it is saved, than when it is recklessly spent. That's true. But true love waits for so much more than that.

If you truly love someone you'll patiently wait... For your kids as they walk slowly behind you while shopping at the mall. While they are serving our country in a foreign land. You wait up for your spouse when they come home after working late. You wait until just the right time to "pop the question." Until you're both ready to have kids. Until your spouse has peace that it's time to take that new job and move. You'll wait in the waiting room--all night--to make sure the heart surgery went well.

True love waits. The Bible is full of faithful people who had to faithfully wait.

Abraham waited twenty-five years for his promised child. Joseph was only seventeen when God gave him a dream revealing that his brothers would bow down before him (see Genesis 37:1-11). But he had to wait about twenty-four years, enduring slavery, prison, and famine before God's prophetic dreams were fulfilled.

The children of Israel waited for four hundred years in Egypt before God sent Moses to deliver them. Hannah desperately wanted a son, so she prayed and waited faithfully for years and years before God finally answered her prayer "in due time" with Samuel (1 Samuel 1:20).

David writes in Psalm 27:14, *"From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him."*

After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah reminded the people in Lamentations, “*The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*” (Lamentations 3:25-26).

Rewards, strength, and salvation are all promises tied to waiting on the Lord. Acts chapter 2 is often called the birthday of the church. But Luke begins his story in Acts 1, not with the outpouring of the Spirit, the passionate preaching of the gospel, nor powerful miracles. Rather, it begins with waiting. Our text this morning comes from Acts 1. Look at verses 1 through the first part of vs. 4:

*In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to **wait** for the promise of the Father.*

So what’s the big command Jesus gives his disciples after his resurrection? Wait! Before the Holy Spirit. Before the tongues of flame. Before the miracles. Before the powerful preaching. Before 3,000 baptisms. Before reaching the ends to the earth. They had to wait. They had to wait on his time. They had to wait on his plan. They had to wait on his provision.

It’s no different for you and me. Are you willing to wait for Jesus? As a Christian you are in a relationship with Jesus and, when you love someone, you’re willing to wait for them.

There are times in each of our Spiritual journeys we must learn to wait. When God closes one door and we’re waiting for another to open. A relationship ends. We leave a job. We step down from some position. Something we’ve been working hard on and pouring our heart into finally reaches its endpoint. It’s done. What do I do now? Many times in these moments we want God to show us the next thing right away. What next, Lord? What now?

Sometimes the answer is, “Wait.” I’m convinced sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is wait. So, why wait? Why did Jesus make the disciples wait? Why does he want us to wait?

## **I. Learning**

First, as our relationship with Jesus overlaps with the rest of life during this time of waiting, we are in a better position to learn more about Jesus. We learn in the waiting. We learn who we really are. We learn who He really is, and we learn why we really need Him.

In these final days before launching the church, Jesus is teaching the apostles. During these 40 days, Look at vs 2, it says that he gave them commands through the Holy Spirit. In vs 3, He gave them proof of his resurrection and taught them about the nature of the kingdom of God. They weren’t just waiting. They were learning. To do what he wanted them to do, it was essential that they learn as much as they could about Him, His character, and His mission.

Times of waiting are times to listen and to learn. Think of how it is with human relationships. When we first meet someone, we don't know anything about them. As we learn more about someone, a friendship develops. As we understand them better, we become deeper friends. When we love someone we want to learn as much as we can about that other person.

Where were you born? Where did you go to school? What's your favorite movie? Who's your favorite team? What music do you like? As our relationship deepens our desire for knowledge increases. What are their dreams? What are their passions? What makes them tick? Why are they the way they are? What's their criminal record? How much debt do they have?

Sometimes Jesus has you wait, because he wants you to get to know him better.

## **II. Loyalty**

Secondly, waiting in a relationship shows our loyalty. As our lives overlap with Jesus during these times of waiting, we are in a better position to grow more loyal to Jesus.

When you are willing to wait for someone, it proves your loyalty. If you care about someone deeply, you might wait for them 30 minutes or an hour. But for someone you don't know, you give up after 5 minutes.

Every military spouse with a deployed husband or wife understands this. For many long months, you can wait, and be loyal, and it makes the reunion all that much sweeter, or you cannot wait, and it pulls the relationship apart.

Friends are loyal. Spouses should be loyal. True love is loyal. Jesus wants the apostles to wait for Him because—in waiting—they will learn that Jesus is loyal to them and keeps his promises.

Look at verses 4-5:

*4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

Jesus wants them to know that He will be loyal to them...that the Father keeps His promises. In my experience, it's almost impossible to wait for someone you don't trust—to be loyal to someone who has not been loyal to you. You have to trust they will come, that they will do what they said they would do. They have to trust you will wait. Waiting requires loyalty.

## **III. Longing**

Why did Jesus ask His disciples to wait? As our lives overlap with Jesus during this time of waiting, we are in a better position to grow in our longing for Jesus.

Waiting creates longing, when what you are waiting for is something or someone you love. I see your posts on Facebook when our kids go off to college, when they go off to the military, when they leave home. Their leaving, and our waiting, creates a longing.

We even have a saying, “Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” When wait for someone you love, your longing increases. The longing comes from knowing that what we’re waiting for is worth waiting for.

For three years the disciples have been following Jesus, living with Jesus, and learning from Jesus. Now, after his death and resurrection, they were wondering is now the time? Is this when Jesus will display his glory? Is this when Jesus will overthrow all evil and establish his Kingdom. This is what we read in verses 6 -11.

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

It’s as if the angels were saying, “Don’t worry. He’s coming back. He’ll do everything he promised. Trust me. It will be worth the wait.

#### **IV. Living**

The last thing we’re to do while waiting on Jesus is living for him. Even in those times where Jesus isn’t the focus, He’s still the focus, if you catch my meaning. Even when we’re at school being pounded by algebra, even when we’re at work and the big deadline is looming, even when we’re on the lake and the fish aren’t biting, even when we’re sitting in the meeting and no one is agreeing, Jesus is still and is always the ultimate reason for why we do all that we do.

Here the disciples have just seen Jesus ascend into heaven and they’re looking on. In my mind’s eye they are all standing there with their mouths open looking kind of clueless. “What do we do now? I don’t know, but he said to wait, so let’s just stand here and stare into the sky.”

And the angels are like, “Why are you guys still standing here looking, when you’ve got living to do.” Just because we’re waiting on him, doesn’t mean we’re not still living for him.

They were called to be his witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. We’ve all been called to be his witnesses in Marshfield, Missouri, and in our schools and in our offices and in our neighborhoods. In everything we do, we are to live for Him. The best way to wait for Jesus is to live for Jesus.

You see, your relationship with Jesus overlaps with every other part of your life. There is no part of your life where you can say, “Here is where my faith ends and this other part of my life begins. Your faith overlaps with everything. Every part of your life is a witness for Jesus.

When you love someone, you wait for them. Waiting on Jesus means learning from him, being loyal to him, longing to be with him, and living for him.

In their book, *Apollo 13*, astronaut Jim Lovell and journalist Jeffrey Kluger tell the now famous story of the mission to the moon that didn't quite make it. NASA's A wiring malfunction caused the ship to lose power in deep space leaving Jim Lovell, Fred Haise, and Jack Swigert in a desperate fight for survival. Their mission was no longer to get to the moon, but to get back home. Failure was not an option.

In order to get back to earth they had to slingshot around the moon. After an extremely tense twenty-five minutes of radio silence their capsule emerged from the far side of the moon.

Lovell had been to the moon before, but Haise and Swigert had not. They were at the window of the capsule taking pictures. They were transfixed by the scene 139 miles below them. For five minutes the two astronauts spent staring out the window. Lovell was hard at work preparing for their next maneuver.

Lovell had to work around his spellbound capsule-mates. Eventually, Lovell – seeing enough of his crew staring out the window– asked an important question, “Gentlemen, what are your intentions?”

Startled, Haise and Swigert spun around. “Our intentions?”

“Yes,” said Lovell. “We have a PC+2 maneuver coming up. Is it your intention to participate in it?”

“Jim,” Haise said somewhat feebly, “this is our last chance to get these shots. We’ve come all the way out here– don’t you think they’re going to want us to bring back some pictures?”

“If we don’t get home, you’ll never get them developed,” Lovell said.

It’s kind of like the angels asking the disciples, “What are your intentions? Do you want to look on or do you want to live with Jesus.”

Lovell and Kluger go on to write, “Haise and Swigert stowed their cameras and returned to their stations somewhat sheepishly, and for the next hour or so the crew worked purposefully.”<sup>i</sup>

While we wait, we can look or we can live. Let your life overlap with Him. Let your connection to Him grow and great things will happen. This is how we grow: as we overlap our lives with Jesus living each moment of our lives with Him. What are your intentions? Do you want to look on or live for Jesus?

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<sup>i</sup> Lovell, Jim & Kluger, Jeffery (1994) *Apollo 13*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY. pp. 240-241